



Discussion Guide

For Adults Working with Teens

Sexetc.org

answer
sex ed, honestly

RUTGERS
UNIVERSITY

Lesson: This Is Not a Test! Missy Elliott Tells Teens to “Break the Cycle” of Violence

Learning Objectives: By the end of this lesson, participants will be able to:

- Describe characteristics of a healthy relationship, unhealthy relationship, and domestic violence
- List at least three warning signs of an abusive relationship

Materials:

- Copies of the article “**This Is Not a Test! Missy Elliott Tells Teens to ‘Break the Cycle’ of Violence**”
- Copies of the worksheet *Is It Abuse If?*
- A copy of the Forced Choice Statements for Facilitators
- Pens or pencils

Preparation:

Review the Forced Choice Statements for Facilitators and select which four or five might be most appropriate for your group.

Procedure:

1. Introduce the lesson by explaining to students that relationship/domestic violence is a serious and widespread problem in our culture. This activity will help students clarify what they think and how they feel about this issue, outline some potentially abusive situations, and provide resources for further information and support.
2. Tell students that you will read a situation with two possible choices aloud. Students will then move to the side of the room that represents which choice they feel is best given the situation. Have students stand. Read to them the first statement, indicating which side of the room represents each choice. Instruct students to move to the side of the room that represents their choice.
3. Once students have moved, tell them to talk with others on their side of the room who agreed with their choice. Give students a few minutes to discuss.

4. Start with the side with fewer students and ask for volunteers to share why they felt that decision was best.

(Facilitator's Note: You might need to remind students about class ground rules to insure that only one person speaks at a time and to listen and respect others.)

Next, ask for volunteers to share their opinion from the other side. Remind students that they can switch sides if they hear a compelling argument and change their mind. The facilitator should ask any appropriate clarifying or "devil's advocate" questions. For example, with the question: If your friend confided that his or her partner was being physically abusive, would you:

- try to help your friend, or
- stay out of it

Ask students that would try to help, what is it that they would do specifically to help? Ask students who would stay out of it, what possible consequences would that choice have?

For Adults Working with Teens

5. Read the next statement and follow the same procedure. Spend approximately 15 minutes reading statements, having students move to represent their choice, and discussing their reasons for choosing that side. Then ask students to return to their seats.

6. To process the entire activity, ask students the following questions:

- What was helpful about this exercise?
- What did you learn (about others or yourself) that you didn't know before?

7. Distribute copies of the article "**This Is Not a Test! Missy Elliott Tells Teens to 'Break the Cycle' of Violence**" and read together with the class. Ask the following discussion questions related to the article:

- What are characteristics of an unhealthy relationship? A healthy relationship?
- Why might teens not tell or get help if they're in an abusive relationship?
- Where could teens go to get help or more information?

8. Divide students into groups of three. Distribute the *Is It Abuse If?* worksheet to each student. Instruct groups to read each statement and discuss whether they feel the situation is abusive or not and why. Give them ten minutes to complete this exercise.

9. Gather students' attention and begin discussing each situation individually. Ask groups to report their opinions about whether the situations are abusive or not and why.

(Facilitator's Note: All of the situations could be considered abusive [emotionally, physically, sexually, etc.] depending on certain factors, such as age, relationship between people, interest in pressing charges, etc. They are intentionally vague with no clear answer, to spur group discussion.)

To close the lesson, ask the small groups to briefly discuss the following question:

What might help prevent dating violence among teens?

Ask volunteers to share their ideas with the entire group. Remind students that resources for information and support about relationship violence are listed in the article.

The Discussion Guide was created by Nora Gelperin, M.Ed., director of training and education at Answer. For additional lessons, go to http://answer.rutgers.edu/page/lesson_plans.

Copyright © Answer, Rutgers University. All Rights Reserved.

“Is It Abuse If...?” (50 minutes)

Learning Objective: By the end of this activity, participants will be able to:

- Clarify their own values about what is and what is not abuse in a relationship

1. Say to the participants, *Building on the idea that we don't always think of certain behaviors when we hear abuse, we often also disagree on what is or is not abusive.* Let participants know that you are going to hand out a sheet to them titled, “Is it Abuse If...?” Ask them to fill the sheet out individually (providing pens to those in need). Highlight the fact that they can only choose “Yes” or “No” – there is no “unsure,” so they must commit to an answer.

2. Once they have finished, break the group into smaller groups of no fewer than 4 each. Let them know that their task is to discuss the examples, and in the end, all agree on what within the examples constitutes abuse and what does not.

3. Once the groups have been discussing for about 15 minutes, open the discussion up into the larger group, keeping the small groups where they are. Ask the following questions:

- *What was it like to do the activity? What was easy or hard about it?*
- *Did your group come to consensus on ALL the examples? Why/why not?*
- *Which of the examples did your group get stuck on? (Discuss this example with the larger group, taking other examples as requested).*

(FACILITATOR NOTE: It is also important to try to stir up the discussion with participants, modeling this so that they will do the same with their students. For example, on the statement pertaining to a boyfriend slapping his girlfriend, you can ask, “What if the girlfriend was becoming hysterical, and he was trying to get her to focus – rather than slapping her in anger?” Be sure that the questions you come up with present both sides to avoid betraying your own opinions on these. Point out to the teachers that they should do the same, highlighting that there are no absolute right or wrongs – it depends on the circumstances, on the people involved, etc. Let them know that they should NOT tell students how they would vote on any of these statements.)

4. Take home messages: What one person may determine to be abusive in a relationship may not be the same thing as what another person does. This is why communication, especially about expectations in a relationship, is so important. If a person feels disrespected, that person needs to tell her/his partner, and vice versa. Alternatively, if there is a behavior that a person really appreciated, s/he needs to let her/his partner know that as well.

5. Explain to teachers that this is an excellent activity to use in a classroom setting. It is, however, an activity that needs to be facilitated carefully. Provide participants with the following guidelines for conducting this with students:

- *Remind your student of the groundrules.*
- *Let students know that this activity is about what is on their sheet of paper, not their own experience. Tell them even before the activity has started that it might be tempting to compare something they've read to their own relationships, but that this is not the place in which to do so. If you hear that someone is starting to talk about something personal, jump in and remind them of this boundary, asking them to hold off if they're thinking of recounting a personal story or experience.*
- *If a true disagreement exists, move on to another point, highlighting the groundrules, agreeing to disagree.*
- *When facilitating this activity with your students, play the "devil's advocate" as I did. For example, if people feel that the boy who walks his girlfriend to school every morning, picks her up from and walks her to each class, and meets her at the end of the day is being abusive, ask "Is it possible that they just started going out and are really into each other?"*

Is It Abuse If...?

... a girl asks her boyfriend to spend more time with her and less time with his friends, then continues to nag him until he gives her a quick slap to quiet her?

Yes No

... a guy picks up his girlfriend for class every morning, waits for her after every class at school, and walks her home at the end of the day?

Yes No

... a girl starts play-fighting with her boyfriend and they wrestle around on the floor, resulting in bruises on her arm?

Yes No

... a guy tells his girlfriend, in front of her friends, that she would look better if she lost a few pounds?

Yes No

... a guy says he wants to have sex, his girlfriend says she's not ready, but after talking about it, she gives in and has sex with him, even though she doesn't really want to?

Yes No

... a guy who has never hit his girlfriend takes her favorite doll one night, dangles it out the window, and threatens to drop it if his girlfriend doesn't do what he wants?

Yes No

... a girl who wears tight clothing and short skirts walks down the hallway of her school and other students whistle and make sexual comments to her?

Yes No

... a girl who has a relationship with another girl who's not openly lesbian threatens to tell her family that she is?

Yes No